



Working with Families from Diverse Backgrounds

In today's diverse society, it is essential for teachers to create a non-bias and culturally accepting classroom. In doing so, teachers must display positive attitudes, nurture clear social values and be a role model in how to treat and speak to others. Teachers should help children understand the world from different cultural perspectives. Children need to learn to respect others and their differences, while at the same time, recognize similarities. Children need to create a confident self-identity and all students should feel a sense of belonging.

A person's values influence the way they see the world. Teachers should set the example for children's behavior with regard to what they say and do. Encourage children to treat people with kindness and to be open-minded to different cultures, traditions, religions and family structures.

"The goal of diversity is unity." (Eliason & Jenkins, 2012. P 93)

It is critical to a child's development and education that teachers build joint relationships with the families of their students. The best way to build a sense of community is to encourage parent involvement and create respectful partnerships with the families you serve. Teachers and parents can provide support for each other as they share in the responsibility of the education of their children. It is the caring, welcoming and positive attitude of the teacher that makes this possible. A teacher can use the classroom curriculum to help children develop constructive social values and skills by celebrating and conveying family traditions and cultural differences.



Reference: Eliason, C., Jenkins, L., (2012) *A Practical Guide to Early Childhood Curriculum*. New Jersey: Pearson

- Allow children to share personal stories about their families
- Have multicultural books and literature available
- Have open-ended discussions and ask questions about children from different backgrounds
- Listen to music from varied countries and cultures
- Invite family guests to the classroom to share traditions, items, clothing, holidays
- Try foods from various cultures
- Explore similarities and differences among cultures and celebrate each child's uniqueness





Getting Parents Involved

Programs can engage in a variety of activities to develop positive relationships with families at the beginning of the year, when a family first enrolls their children, and continuously throughout the year. Here are a few ways to do so:

- Schedule a home visit.
- Have an open house for children and families to explore classrooms, playground and the rest of the center. Help connect families who have common backgrounds and issues.
- Be flexible and offer events at varying times to accommodate more families.
- Hold a Welcome Families meeting at a convenient time for all parents to solicit ideas from them about activities and goals for their children. Provide questionnaires (in all home languages) to learn about children's interests, strengths, pets, hobbies. Seek volunteers by letting parents know about upcoming events and opportunities.

Once parents have become involved with the program, they need to be continually engaged and included throughout the year. One suggestion is to send home weekend project packs with activities parents can do with their children. Keep them simple, and make sure both the instructions and the activity are provided in the language spoken by the adults in the home.

Center Highlight

Agape Children's Academy of New Jersey
Irvington—Essex County

Director Jackie Green has hosted numerous family events and parent workshops throughout the year as part of her commitment to quality care and best practices of family and community engagement; **GNJK Standards Category 3**. The center hosted an Open House and a "Spring into Reading" Literacy Night to highlight a few.

Below is some information shared from Director, Jackie Greene, where she explains the "WHY" behind the Literacy Night event.



"Early literacy development is important because it establishes the foundation for future development and learning. Beginning at birth, children learn language from their caretakers and parents. Interaction between parents and children stimulates neurons in the brain. Development of the brain depends on words. When the same words are repeated over and over, those paths provide the capability for learning.

Parental involvement in preschool is critically important to children's education in general and to their literacy development in particular. Children feel valued, respected and important when parents support them by volunteering in the classroom and assisting in their learning experience. However, too often, parents limit their participation and exclude themselves from their children's education because they do not have a support system to encourage their participation.

With the understanding that parental involvement plays an important role in preschool literacy development, Agape Children's Academy planned a literacy night called "*Spring into Reading*." It was well attended by our parents and was a very exciting evening. Our teachers re-enacted "The Three Little Pigs" retold by Bonnie Dobkin and modeled reading using the book "Something from Nothing" by Phoebe Gilman. Teachers also shared letter and word games parents could play with children using items found in their homes. We shared the importance of having a print rich home with parents. This is simply having books, writing tools, paper, magazines and other information which children can relate to their everyday life.

Parents are major stakeholders in their children's education and we are committed to sharing information that will assist them in this process. Parents who are involved are able to continue the learning process at home. As parents gain more knowledge about their child's development, they are able to assist them with activities which will increase their development."

Video Resource

[Engaging Families and Creating Trusting Partnerships to Improve Child and Family Outcomes](#)

"What's important to have a positive, trusting partnership with a teacher or provider is to feel like they see your child like you do. All the things that make him unique and special; all that we love about him, they love about him too." **-Parent**



Parent Communication in Family Child Care

Parent communication and engagement is an important part of a Family Child Care provider's role. When working with young children, it is considered best practice, as well as part of early learning guidelines, for educators to find ways to communicate with families and engage them in their child's learning.

In today's world where many parents work, communication and engagement can prove harder to accomplish than one might assume. Families are busy, pick up/drop off times are often rushed, and the large amounts of paperwork and newsletters from teachers/providers are often thrown away without even being read. It's very easy for providers to feel they should just give up trying.

Therefore, being informed that you need to communicate and engage even more with the families you serve might make you feel rather frustrated. As overwhelming as it can seem, building those relationships with parents is worth the effort. Not only will it benefit the children, but it is important to the growth and well-being of your Family Child Care Center. When children and families feel a connection and sense of belonging to your home, they will spread the word to others and keep coming back to where they know that their children are happy and the parents are supported.

Invite parents to complete a brief questionnaire. Parents are the best source of information about their own children, and they can also be a wonderful resource by bringing special interests/talents/cultural traditions to share with all the children in your care. Some suggestions of questions to include:

- Tell me about your child.
- What is their favorite activity?
- What comforts them when they are sad?
- When do they usually nap?
- What is their favorite snack/meal?
- Would you like to come in and read a story or do an art project with the children?
- Is there a special interest/talent/cultural tradition you would like to come in and share with the group?
- Is there a special topic that you would like to see incorporated into the curriculum? (e.g., adoption, new siblings, moving to a new home)



Suggestions that align with GNJK Category 3:

- Have a community resource handbook or materials available to parents that include community and school-based resources and direct services to promote child/family safety, health and stability (3.2.2).
- Allow families to become active participants in their education by providing family events and encouraging parents to attend. Host a family picnic, invite parents to read to the children or ask them to share a cultural experience/tradition with the children (3.3.3).
- Offer parent conferences to engage families as partners in their child's learning and development (3.4.2).
- Consider implementing best practices such as written daily communication for infants/toddlers and weekly for preschoolers. (3.2.1).
- Encourage parent participation in advisory councils to engage in their children's education (3.5.2).

References:

<http://families.naeyc.org/accredited-article/10-naeyc-program-standards#7>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement>

<http://childcareaware.org/providers/making-a-difference/family-engagement/>

Save the Date for these Upcoming Opportunities!

Webinars, *Open to all GNJK programs*

Date	Time	Topic	Presenter	Description
9/27/17	12-1pm	Parent Engagement: Closing the Gap from Home to School	Grow NJ Kids Technical Assistance Center- North	This webinar will help guide educators with understanding the reasons for lack of involvement among our parents and caregivers. In addition, individuals will also be able to identify the needs of the different types of parents that we serve. Register

GNJK Peer Learning Communities (PLCs), *County Specific*

Date	Time	Location	County
9/12/17	12-2pm	North Bergen Public Library- Kennedy Branch, North Bergen	Hudson
9/27/17	1-3pm	Child Care Connection, Trenton	Mercer
10/18/17	1:30-3:30pm	Cranbury Presbyterian Nursery School, Cranbury	Middlesex/Somerset
10/19/17	1-3pm	TBD	Monmouth/Ocean
12/6/17	10am-12pm	Learning Resource Center, East Orange	Essex

Virtual Learning Community

*Open to the Central Region
(Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean & Somerset Counties)*

Join us from the comfort of your office to discuss GNJK related topics, Continuous Quality Improvement and leadership in the field of Early Care and Education. On the third Wednesday of each month, we will be hosting an on-line forum to reflect on best practices and other topics as requested to meet your needs.

Online & Phone Accessible
Wednesday, September 20th
1-2pm
[Click to Register](#)

Networking Meetings

Northeast Region

Friday, November 3rd
10am-2pm
Learning Resource Center
7 Glenwood Ave. #201, East Orange

Central Region

Monday, October 16th
9:30am-12:30pm
RWJ Conference Center
100 Quakerbridge Rd., Hamilton



Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey™

PCA-NJ operates a broad range of preventative services designed to support the improvement and quality of professional workforces and programming, resulting in significant positive impacts on family functioning and health in all 21 counties. **PCA-NJ programs include:**

- ◆ Grow NJ Kids TAC
- ◆ Healthy Families
- ◆ Parents as Teachers
- ◆ Parent Linking Program
- ◆ Enough Abuse
- ◆ Middlesex County Council for Young Children
- ◆ Human Trafficking Prevention
- ◆ Essex Pregnancy & Parenting Connection
- ◆ Parent Education & Technical Assistance
- ◆ The Period of Purple Crying

Central Region TA Center 103 Church Street, Suite 210 New Brunswick, NJ 08901 732.246.8060

Northeast Region TA Center 550 Broad Street, Suite 1105 Newark, NJ 07102 973.371.5301

<https://www.preventchildabusenj.org/growtac>